

Traffic Safety News and Facts for Employers October 2, 2003

New Awareness Program in Michigan to Prevent Car-Deer Crashes

On average, every eight minutes in Michigan, a motorist hits a deer. A new public awareness campaign announced by the Michigan Deer Crash Coalition (MDCC) is aimed at reducing that number by telling motorists to be extra alert when driving this fall. Public Service Announcements are being sent to all Michigan television stations, aimed at promoting awareness of the problem amongst the driving public and reducing the number of deaths and injuries occurring each year on state roads. According to the Michigan State Police Criminal Justice Information Center, there were 63,136 deer-vehicle crashes in 2002, down approximately 4 percent from 65,993 in 2001. However, due to crashes that go unreported, the actual total remains closer to 80,000. More than 16 percent of all crashes in Michigan involve deer. Nearly half occur in the October-to-December mating season when deer are very active, and crashes spike again in spring when the season's first grass appears along highway rights-of-way. Car-deer crashes peaked in 1996, but have stabilized at slightly lower levels in the six years since. Car-deer crashes in Michigan cause an estimated \$130 million in auto repairs each year. Nationally, reported collisions alone cause an estimated \$1.1 billion in damage. One study found that car-deer crashes kill more people in the nation than all commercial airline, train and bus accidents combined in a typical year. Gov. Jennifer Granholm has declared October "Michigan Car-Deer Crash Safety Awareness Month."

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New Congestion Study Shows Traffic Jams Still Growing

This year's Urban Mobility Report, published by the Texas Transportation Institute, measures the effects of five congestion remedies in the cities where they are being used. Specifically, the study illustrates the effects of public transportation service and bus and carpool lanes, and three types of roadway operating efficiencies - traffic signal coordination, freeway incident management (clearing crashes and disabled vehicles), and the use of freeway entrance ramp meters (signals that regulate traffic flow onto the freeway). As in years past, the study looks at 75 cities, according to factors such as hours of travel delay per person and the Travel Time Index - a measure of the extra travel time per trip. But with additional analysis, researchers have produced a new set of mobility measures that gauge traffic problems and their potential solutions. **To view the Urban Mobility Report, visit http://tti.tamu.edu/product/catalog/reports/mobility_report_2003.pdf.**

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NHTSA Rules Challenged in Getting Information from Automakers

Consumer groups are challenging new federal rules limiting public access to information reported to the government about potential auto safety problems. In a petition for the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), the Center for Auto Safety, Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety and the Trauma Foundation argued that NHTSA's decision to keep vehicle warranty, defect and repair data reported by automakers confidential violates the Freedom of Information Act. The groups said that NHTSA's policy runs counter to the TREAD Act Congress passed three years ago in the wake of the Firestone tire recall. The legislation was designed to help federal regulators identify and track defects earlier to prevent a similar debacle. The consumer groups said the law was meant to ensure that NHTSA and the public had access to safety information. **For a copy of the TREAD Act, visit http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/nhtsa/Cfc_title49/publ414.106.pdf. For more information, visit <http://www.citizen.org/autosafety/nhtsa/tread/earlywarning/> and <http://www.autosafety.org/article.php?scid=93&did=789>.**

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GM Makes Splash with New Age Car

Last year, General Motors (GM) made a splash with a concept car called Hy-wire that features Nintendo-style handgrips for steering, plus brakes and an accelerator that work electronically instead of via pressure from the driver's foot. That's pie in the sky for now, but come 2012 or 2015, a surprising amount of it may be for real. Cars will still have a steering wheel; they'll also probably still have a conventional gasoline engine instead of the Hy-wire's fuel-cell-and-hydrogen powerplant. Bernd Bohn, a top executive at Robert Bosch, the huge German auto-components company, recently predicted that internal combustion engines will still have 95% of the market in 2015 and 85% in 2025. **For more information on the 21st Century car, visit**

http://www.businessweek.com/technology/content/sep2003/tc2003094_5514_tc127.htm.

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Safety Executives are Key to the New Guidelines on Related Road Safety

U.K. Health and Safety Executive officials revealed new guidance on work-related road safety, naming fleet managers as the key to changing the way employers and suppliers treat safety. Industry experts are predicting the guidance will spark a revolution in the safety standards among Britain's fleets and their suppliers. It has been estimated that up to a third of all road traffic accidents involve somebody who is at work at the time. This may account for over 20 fatalities and 250 serious injuries every week. Within the 24-page guide is a checklist of nearly 100 areas that fleets need to examine to be certain they are meeting their duty of care to employees. Produced with the Department for Transport, it contains guidance for employers on their responsibility for managing work-related road safety under existing health and safety law. It also reveals the benefits of managing work-related road safety and outlines best practice examples of managing work-related road safety. How to assess risks for driving activities and how to evaluate the risk are also covered. Production of generic guidance was one of the recommendations of an independent work-related road safety task group which was appointed by Government and HSE in 2000 to look at ways to reduce at-work traffic incidents.

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Automated Garages are the Answer to Some Urban Design Dilemmas

In Hoboken, NJ, the urban design dilemma of what to do with all the cars in an area where car volume is high and space is at a premium was answered. Build an automated garage. Although an automated garage is more expensive to build, it typically takes only about half as much precious real estate as a conventional ramped garage to handle the same number of cars, or even more. Hoboken's Garden Street Garage is completely computerized, with two identical elevator systems that are able to move simultaneously in both vertical and horizontal directions and communicate with each other by wireless transmitters. The garage's computer figures out which of the hundreds of spaces in the building a vehicle should occupy, and then delivers it there untouched by human hands. **For more information, visit**

<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9905E1DB123AF932A1575AC0A9659C8B63>.

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Funding for Federal Highway Programs Still up in the Air

House leaders moved to extend funding for federal highway programs and related agencies for at least five months, agreeing on short-term legislation that would not require higher fuel taxes that many in Congress have said are needed for the long term. Congress had until September 30 to pass an extension of the 1998 Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century or write a new multiyear bill. A short-term extension is more likely, giving Congress additional time to write a long-term bill. Without the extension, the programs would run out of money October 1.

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Safety Group Urges Expiration Dates for Tires

A leading safety group called on tire-makers to put expiration or "sell by" dates on tires, including spares, citing evidence that some rubber compounds can break down over time. Consumers driving

on older tires could face catastrophic risks, Strategic Safety said in a letter to federal regulators, referring to a rash of lawsuits in the U.S. and a new safety warning in Europe. The research and consulting firm said manufacturers need to provide expiration dates because older tires can become unstable, even if their tread has not worn down. Included in the letter, the group highlighted 20 recent incidents where older tires failed, leading to 10 deaths.

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Bill Signed in California to Protect Motorists from the Black Box

A little-publicized privacy bill was signed into law September 22, 2003 to protect California motorists from the "black box" that records data on how a vehicle was being driven just before a crash. The legislation, the first of its kind in the nation, prevents the recorded data from being obtained by police or others without the vehicle owner's consent or a court order -- except in cases of safety research in which the owner's identity is protected. The law, which takes effect July 1, 2004, also requires automakers to disclose the presence of the devices in the owner's manual. **For a copy of the law, visit http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/bill/asm/ab_0201-0250/ab_213_bill_20030828_enrolled.pdf.**

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New Study Shows Speed Cameras Save Lives

A new study showing speed cameras save lives may prompt the New South Wales government to install more of them across the state. The independent study found significant drops in deaths and casualties in 28 areas where speed cameras were operating. The number of deaths in the camera areas fell from 21 in the three years leading up to their installation, to one in the two years since. Reported crashes in the area fell by 20 percent and the numbers of motorists exceeding the speed limit was down by 72 percent. **For a news release from the New South Wales Roads and Traffic Authority, visit <http://www.rta.nsw.gov.au/newsevents/speedcamerarelease21092003.html>.**

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US Government to Standardize Warning Lights in Vehicles

The U.S. government proposed recently that all displays and control panel indicators inside new motor vehicles adhere to an internationally recognized set of symbols. NHTSA considered the change several years ago but retreated because of little public or industry support. But regulators now argue that standardizing warning lights and other display signals should be required because cars are more sophisticated than ever. The safety agency wants to include most vehicles in the new rule and also require that steering wheel and dashboard controls be located within easy reach of the driver while that person is wearing a seat belt. Some of these features include windshield wipers and switches that activate air conditioning and heating systems. The Center for Auto Safety, an advocacy group, worried that drivers would not understand all international symbols, especially for brakes. Most brake warnings on U.S. vehicles illuminate a light that spells out "brake" while the international symbol is a brake drum and shoes.

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Most Common Driving Errors Identified in Training Groups Study

Smith System, a professional driver-training firm, released the results of a study that found inadequate following distance to be the most common driving error. The Smith System study, gathered from 50 years of training more than 100,000 drivers, shows that most motorists maintain between one and two seconds behind the vehicle in front of them. Smith System recommends a four second following distance for today's traffic conditions. In its analysis, Smith System found that many drivers are still relying on a two second following distance recommended in early driver training courses. The two second separation distance has been abandoned by most state DMV's as it was derived from testing stopping distances under ideal conditions, which rarely exist. **To view the Smith System news release, visit http://www.smith-system.com/news_release_most_common.htm.**

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Survey Shows British Motorists Do Not Know Proper Stopping Distance for Their Vehicle

Company drivers spend their lives on the road seconds from disaster because they do not know how long it takes a modern car to stop, new research suggests. Produced as part of Road Safety Week, the survey's findings show that nearly two-thirds of British motorists do not know the minimum stopping distance at 30mph. A total of 2,000 motorists were quizzed as part of the survey, published by Green Flag Motoring Assistance, and just over a third (37%) gave the correct answer of 23 meters, or the equivalent of six car lengths. Of those who answered incorrectly, just over a third thought the minimum distance was more than 23 meters. One in four thought that 12 meters, the equivalent of three car lengths, was enough distance to stop suddenly and safely. In an emergency braking situation, this would not be enough to prevent a driver from plowing into the car in front, or hitting a pedestrian. Of the respondents it was found that younger motorists were more accurate with their answers. Two in five 18 to 24-year-olds surveyed came up with the right answer but among those aged between 45 and 54 years old less than a third gave the right answer.

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Traffic Safety News for our Families...

Report on Drugged Driving and Young Drivers

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Service's report Drugged Driving, released from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, indicates that in 2002, between 10 and 18 percent of young drivers age 17 to 21 reported driving under the influence of an illicit drug during the previous 12 months. According to a Department of Transportation press release, data also show that of the nearly 4 million high school seniors in the United States, approximately one in six (600,000) drive under the influence of marijuana, a number nearly equivalent to those who drive under the influence of alcohol (640,000). **For a copy of the report, visit**

<http://www.samhsa.gov/oas/nhsda/2k2nsduh/2k2SoFW.pdf>.